

STATE OF MAINE  
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

Docket No. 2000-752

January 2, 2001

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION  
Inquiry into Revisions to The Basic  
Service Calling Area Rule, Chapter 204.

PROCEDURAL  
ORDER

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A Technical Conference has been scheduled for January 31, 2001, at 9:30 AM in the PUC Hearing Room, 242 State Street, Augusta, Maine. While all parties and interested persons are welcome to attend, this technical conference is primarily for telephone utilities affected by possible changes to Chapter 204 to discuss with Staff how one or two of the different alternatives described in the Notice of Inquiry could be implemented.

The focus of this conference will be on alternative number 6 ("Flat-Selective" plan), possibly in combination with alternative number 5 (local calling to contiguous and near-contiguous exchanges), as described in the Notice of Inquiry. Comments received from telephone utility customers favored these alternatives as viable solutions to their calling area needs.

Staff presently and tentatively proposes the Flat-Selective plan, without a block-of-time restriction, as a replacement for the Circle Calling Plan described in Part IV of Chapter 204. Staff also proposes that the BSCA provisions of the rule be retained for those exchanges that meet the "50%/four calls" standard. Our criteria for possible rule changes continue to be simplicity, customer choice and ease of use, effectiveness, and price. Many details need to be discussed and we invite all parties to provide information on any of the following issues, either at the technical conference or in advance in writing:

1. Should the Flat-Selective plan be available to both residential and non-residential customers?

2. How should the plan be priced and structured; different rates for residential and non-residential customers? Should there be one amount to buy-in to the plan with a minimum number of exchanges, with an additional smaller amount per additional exchanges? Northland Telephone Company's proposal for its Liberty area exchanges contained three choices that could be taken separately or together, each for a flat monthly charge of \$6: all contiguous exchanges, three exchanges within thirty miles, and/or three more exchanges, also within thirty miles. Verizon proposed, in its initial comments, a development of its Selective Calling Service ("a Flat-Selective plan variation") that would not include an option consisting of all contiguous exchanges. Instead, Verizon proposed allowing customers to choose a single additional exchange within thirty miles for a relatively high "illustrative" monthly fee (\$10) and a relatively low monthly fee (\$1) for each additional exchange. Verizon proposed that the flat fee(s) would apply only to the first 300 minutes of calling and that additional minutes would be priced at 5¢ per minute. In the interest of both simplicity and affordability Staff presently favors a plan where all usage would be included in a flat fee and there would be no per-minute charges for overtime calling.
3. Should the number of exchanges available to customers or distance from home exchange be restricted? The current circle calling plan, as well as the Northland and Verizon proposals, covers exchanges within thirty miles. Is that distance sufficient or should companies in the more rural areas of Maine allow individual flat-selective routes of greater distance? The Public Advocate argued that thirty miles might be too short for very rural areas. Would it be

advisable to extend the thirty-mile radius to include a designated commercial center, if there was no commercial center (e.g. defined as an exchange with so-many lines) within thirty miles?

4. How would receiving and initiating companies compensate each other?

Estimating take-rates to determine pricing and revenue impacts will be difficult.

Should the current tracking account mechanism (Ch. 204, Part VII, A) be retained? Attached to this Order is a Staff suggested compensation plan.

5. To what carriers should Chapter 204 apply? The Staff's present view is that the rule should apply only to Eligible Telecommunications Carriers (ETCs).

Note, however, that such applicability assumes that BSCA and optional calling plans are really "extended local" calling plans rather than toll-calling plans, even though inter-company compensation must necessarily address lost toll revenue.

Parties may file written responses to the questions above, either by mail to the Maine PUC, 242 State Street, Augusta, ME, 04333-0018; or by email to [maine.puc@state.me.us](mailto:maine.puc@state.me.us).

Dated: January 2, 2001

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Ballou  
Presiding Officer

Attachment